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EDITOR'S NOTES

Implementing K-6 Inquiries Together



Emma Thacker
Guest Editor

While using inquiry in the elementary social studies classroom is certainly not a new idea, the publication of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards in 2010 renewed the call for planning and implementing social studies inquiries.¹ As “the success of the C3 Framework will lie in its implementation,”² many have pointed to the need for K-6 teachers to have more guidance, examples, and support for their efforts to design and implement high-quality inquiries in their classrooms. To supplement existing resources such as “C3 Teachers,”³ I decided to use my guest-editorship of this issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner* to highlight examples of elementary teachers and teacher educators working together to implement the C3 Framework so as to engage and challenge their students. Readers will discover that every article in this issue is the result of an interesting collaboration.

In the first article, “Inquiry through the Lens of Identity: An Exploration and Inquiry in the Fifth Grade,” **Katherina A. Payne** and **Erin Green** describe how a fifth-grade teacher and her students explored their own identities and how those identities shape the ways they experience the world. Students were then able to apply their deepened understanding of identity throughout the school year. For example, the authors highlight an inquiry into the Chicano Rights movement (*El Movimiento*), in which students analyzed a variety of sources to learn more about the struggle to recognize the civil rights of Latinx people in general, as well as the efforts of Mexican-American activist Rodolfo (Corky) Gonzalez. The inquiry culminated in a public event, a dynamic civil rights timeline, in which students shared their understanding with family, friends, and community members.

Katie Anderson Knapp and **Amy Hopkins** describe the successes of an inspirational collaboration between the faculty of an entire elementary school and a teacher educator in “What’s the Buzz? A K-5 School Uses the C3 Framework.” they describe inquiries designed and implemented by students and teachers in kindergarten, second, and fourth grades. This article provided the inspiration for the **Pullout** in this issue, which comprises graphic organizers based on the work of **Amy Hopkins** and her colleagues **Janet Longanecker** and **Tiffany Yehle**. “Handouts for an Inquiry Project” can assist in the design of compelling and supporting questions, in student-driven research, and in collecting and organizing evidence.

Erin M. Case, **Kerri J. Tobin**, and **Melissa Cruz** integrate art with social studies in “Chanting about Citizenship: Using Arts Integration and the C3 Framework.” They describe an inquiry in which second grade students investigated a compelling question about good citizenship using a variety of print and visual sources. The students then communicated their conclusions by writing and performing their own chants about what makes a good citizen. With time always an issue, authors describe moving through the whole inquiry arc in as little as 90 minutes of class time.

Carly Muetterties and **Jess Haney** share a historically and currently poignant inquiry into the enduring remnants of slavery on our national landscape. In their article, “How Did Slavery Shape My State? Using Inquiry to Explore Kentucky History” they describe creating and implementing an inquiry that brings history, geography, and civic spaces together. Following the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), they used a variety of sources and formative performance tasks related to each supporting question of the inquiry. To take informed action, the fourth-grade students wrote letters to their mayor, suggesting how the history of slavery might best be memorialized in the community.

In their article “We Came to Colorado: Third Graders Inquire into the Past to Honor their Present,” **Corey R. Sell**, **Jennie Schmaltz**, and **Stephanie Hartman** describe the use of an inquiry that celebrates bilingual students’ linguistic and cultural traditions. In the inquiry, the third-graders used primary and secondary sources to investigate the history of their community in Colorado. Students connected local history to the histories of their own families before presenting their results at a family engagement night. In order to create such a personally relevant inquiry, the authors worked closely with local historians, librarians, and museum educators as well as accessing online documents from a variety of reliable archives.

Inspired by a photo included in that article, **Brandon Vogt** and **Rebecca Theobald** with **Steven S. Lapham** created a brief item, “The Physical Geography of the San Luis Valley Region of South Central Colorado,” inviting students to examine geographical features as well as to further support student

inquiry using a breathtaking landscape image as a source. The cover of this issue is a detail from that image.

I hope readers will find the creative C3-inspired inquiries, lessons, and activities within this issue to be useful as they work to provide meaningful social studies instruction for K-6 students. We received many manuscripts that highlighted the use of inquiry for students to explore important and timely social studies topics. All of the peer reviewed and published articles here (and one that overflowed the pages and will appear in a future issue) communicate that elementary teachers and students are meeting the challenge of implementing the C3 Framework in their classrooms and are doing it well. I hope that this issue of *SSYL* helps to support further collaborations and successes for our readers. 🌍

Notes

1. NCSS, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013).
2. Kathy Swan and Susan Griffin, “Beating the Odds: The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards,” *Social Education*, 77, no. 6 (2013): 321.
3. C3 Teachers is a collaborative website where teachers and teacher educators share high-quality inquiries from across the United States, as well as their experiences using inquiry in the classroom. See www.c3teachers.org.

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Lenses of identity. See pages 4–8.

